

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 14803 121551Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2299

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 14803

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS PFOR ET US

SUBJ: US-ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS AND MILITARY

ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA

REF: STATE 271800 AND PREVIOUS

THE FOLLOWING IS SUBMITTED IN THE LIGHT OF THE GUIDANCE CONTAINED  
REGTEL AND IN ANTICIPATION OF THE IMMINENT CONVERSATION IN  
WASHINGTON WITH ETHIOPIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER DESIGNATE KIFLE  
WODAJO.

1. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, WE HAVE RECEIVED MIXED SIGNALS  
FROM THE POST-NOVEMBER 23 EPMG CONCERNING ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS  
THE UNITED STATES. TO RECAPITULATE BRIEFLY, THESE INDICATIONS  
INCLUDE ON THE ONE HAND THE ABSENCE OF ANY FORMAL EPMG STATEMENT  
TO US ON ITS VIEWS WITH RESPECT TO OUR FUTURE RELATIONS; THE  
MANIFOLD SIGNS OF SUSPICION REGARDING THE ACTIVITIES OF  
THE OFFICIAL AMERICAN PRESENCE; THE HOSTILE EDITORIAL IN THE  
DECEMBER 10 ETHIOPIAN HERALD (CF ADDIS 14661); STATEMENTS,  
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, INDICATING RESENTMENT OVER INTER ALIA  
AMERICAN PRESSURES EXERCISED UPON THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES  
IN BEHALF OF THE EMPEROR; THE ACCUMULATION OF FRAGMENTARY BUT  
PERSUASIVE INTELLIGENCE ON THE CONTINUING SEARCH FOR  
ALTERNATIVES TO US MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS WELL AS THE ADVOCACY  
BY AT LEAST SOME "DIRG" MEMBERS OF SHIFTING ETHIOPIA'S FOREIGN  
POLICY AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS THE  
SOCIALIST STATES. THESE NEGATIVE INDICATORS HAVE, HOWEVER,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 ADDIS 14803 121551Z

BEEN BALANCED BY OTHER SIGNS APPARENTLY INDICATIVE OF A

CONTINUING EPMG DESIRE FOR CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE USG. THEY INCLUDE A MAJOR AND SUSTAINED EFFORT WITHIN THE MOD TO CONCLUDE AND EXPAND FMS MAP CREDIT AND PURCHASE CASES; THE STATEMENT OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF, MAJ.GEN. GIZAW BELAYNEH TO CHMAAG THAT "MY PEOPLE NEED TO SEE YOUR FRIENDLY FACES" CONTINUING EVIDENCE OF A RISING ETHIOPIAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT EFFORT TO COMPLY WITH MAAG'S ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS; THE APPOINTMENT OF KIFLE WODAJO AS ETHIOPIA'S NEW FOREIGN MINISTER; THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE, AMB. AYALEW MANDEFRO, WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO THE US, WHO TOOK THE INITIATIVE TO REMIND CHMAAG DURING LATTER'S FIRST COURTESY CALL UPON HIM DECEMBER 11 OF THE LONGSTANDING FRIENDLY US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONSHIP, STATED THAT HE WAS MEETING CHMAAG IN THAT CONTEXT AS AN OLD FRIEND, SAID THAT HE INTENDED TO CONTINUE AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY TOWARDS USMAAG AND REQUESTED TIS CONTINUED ASSISTANCE; AND, FINALLY, THE DECEMBER 9 STATEMENT OF THE THEN ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER ARAYA EKUBA-EGZY TO THE FRG AMBASSADOR, IN RESPONSE TO THE LATTER'S DIRECT QUESTION, THAT THE EPMG ANTICIPATED "NO CHANGE" IN ETHIOPIA'S FOREIGN POLICY.

2. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE NEGATIVE SIGNALS ABOVE-CITED SEEM CLEARLY ASCRIBABLE TO THE IMPACT OF EVENTS RATHER THAN TO ANY DECISION BY ETHIOPIAN POLICY-MAKERS TO ALTER THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US, AND ALTHOUGH SOME MAY BE TEMPTED IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS TO ASSUME THAT THE CURRENT EPMG IS DOOMED TO AN EARLY DEMISE, WE WOULD CAUTION THAT SUCH AN ASSUMPTION REMAINS PREMATURE AND MAY WELL PROVE UNWARRANTED. THIS HAS LED US, AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, TO EXPRESS CONCERN THAT ELEMENTS WITHIN THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE WHO SEEK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE UNCERTAINTIES CREATED BY THESE EVENTS, NOTABLY IN THE AREA OF US ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, MIGHT ACHIEVE SOME SUCCESS. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN THE LIGHT OF THESE CONCERNS, THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE WHICH CONFRONTS THOSE EXERCISING POWER IN ETHIOPIA TODAY AND THE MIXED SIGNALS ABOVE-DESCRIBED, THAT WE SHOULD NOT RPT NOT COMMIT THE US GOVERNMENT TO AN OPEN-ENDED CONTINUATION OF MAP UNDER ANY AND ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.

3. HAVING SAID THAT, HOWEVER, WE HOPE STRONGLY THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL SEE FIT CLEARLY TO CONVEY TO FOREIGN MINISTER DESIGNATE KIFLE WODAJO THAT PROVIDED THE EPMG WANTS TO MAINTAIN RESPONSIBLE, FRIENDLY AND CLOSE RELATIONS WITH US, THE US

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SECRET

PAGE 03 ADDIS 14803 121551Z

GOVERNMENT, FOR ITS PART, WOULD ALSO WISH TO CONTINUE SUCH A RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA WITH ALL THAT THIS IMPLIES INTER ALIA FOR US MILITARY ASSISTANCE.

4. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT THIS POINT SHOULD ONLY RPT ONLY BE PUT TO THE FONMIN DESIGNATE IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANOTHER, NAMELY, THAT GIVEN OUR COMMITMENT TO THE RULE OF LAW AND THE NATURE OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN THE US, OUR INTEREST IN ETHIOPIA

AND OUR ABILITY TO CONDUCT FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH IT COULD BECOME SIGNIFICANTLY CONSTRAINED IF US PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION WERE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE MANNER IN WHICH THE EPMG DEALS WITH ITS DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND, NOTABLY, WITH THE DETAINEES, ESPECIALLY THE FORMER EMPEROR.

5. THE EMBASSY MAKES THESE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE BELIEF THAT SOME STRAIGHT SPEAKING IS CALLED FOR IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. THE EPMG HAS ALSO RECEIVED MIXED SIGNALS FROM US. NOT ONLY HAVE WE MADE OUR VIES ABOUT THE NOVEMBER 23 EXECUTIONS UNEQUIVOCALLY CLEAR, BUT THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENTS ON THE FUTURE OF US AID HAVE BEEN MISREAD AS A CUTOFF BY MANY ETHIOPIAN DECISION-MAKERS. MOREOVER, THE SHIFT IN OUR POSTURE ATTENDANT UPON DEVELOPMENTS SINCE NOVEMBER 23 FROM ONE ENCOURAGING THE ETHIOPIANS TO CONCLUDE FMS CREDIT AND CASH PURCHASE CASES TO ONE OF PASSIVITY IN THE FACE OF THEIR SHIFT TOWARDS FMS CREDIT AND CASH PURCHASES MUST ALSO GIVE THEM PAUSE. WE INTEND THE POINTS CITED TO STRENGTHEN "DIRG" INTEREST IN SELF-RESTRAINT IN ANTICIPATION OF POSSIBLE FUTURE CRISES WHILE LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR ADJUSTMENTS IN THE US POSTURE WHICH MAY BECOME UNAVOIDABLE SHOULD THERE BE FURTHER EXCESSES. IN MAKING THEM, WE WOULD ALSO WISH TO INDICATE THAT WE REMAIN IN SYMPATHY WITH GENUINE EPMG EFFORTS AT REFORM WHICH REDOUND TO THE BENEFIT OF ETHIOPIA'S PEOPLES AND CONTINUE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE THROUGH OUR PROGRAMS TO THEIR SUCCESS. WE WOULD, FINALLY, RECOMMEND THAT WE BE INSTRUCTED TO REITERATE AT THIS END THE SUBSTANCE OF WHAT THE DEPARTMENT DECIDES TO SAY TO FONMIN KIFLE WODAJO SO THAT WE MAY BE SURE THAT ALL ELEMENTS OF THE EPMG DO, IN FACT, GET THE MESSAGE.

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